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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to provide data on what role organizations for homosexual teachers play in the lives of lesbian, gay and bisexual teachers and to provide these organizations with information on how to strengthen their memberships. Thirteen lesbian and/or gay male teacher organizations assisted by distributing a survey on openness, job stress, and job satisfaction to their members (N=611), who in turn passed surveys along to an additional 289 homosexual or bisexual teachers who were not members of such organizations. Results found that members were more likely to be male, more confident of their civil rights, more likely to be involved in gay civil rights organizations, and less likely to be married or parents. Organization members displayed no significant differences from nonmembers on scales of job satisfaction, but reported significantly less stress at work related to their sexuality. Organization members had somewhat higher scores on measures of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, which, combined with lower scores for sense of personal accomplishment, put them at high risk for teacher burnout. Members were significantly more likely to say they would choose the teaching profession. Results suggest that participation in such organizations helped prevent teacher burnout. Contains 3 tables of data. (PB)

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Joining Gay and Lesbian Teacher Organizations: A study of Members and Non-Members

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Joining Public School Gay and Lesbian Teacher Organizations: A Study of Members and Non-Members.

Currently there are between fifteen and twenty local, state, and national lesbian, gay, and bisexual public school teacher organizations. At the national level there are three established organizations. These are the lesbian and gay caucuses associated with the two national unions and the Lesbian Teachers Network (LTN) which is headquartered in Iowa. In addition there is the rapidly growing Gay, Lesbian and Straight Teachers Network (GLSTN) that includes straight teachers. This group appears to be dominated by gay and lesbian teachers; however straight teachers are encouraged to participate. There are a few state wide groups. Most of the public school gay, lesbian and bisexual teacher organizations are local or regional in membership. At least one group, the Bay Area Network, has several chapters. It is impossible to tell the exact number of teachers who are involved in these organizations; however, the probable number is less than eight thousand when joint memberships are considered. For example, the New York City Lesbian and Gay Teachers Association's membership is between 100 and 150, in a system that has fifty thousand teachers; while, the LTN may be the largest exclusively gay group with over 500 members. Except for two related Colorado groups, there are no local or regional organizations in the south, southwest, mountain, or northern plains states.

These organizations are important because they play a vital role in dispelling homophobia and homosexual stereotypes. By understanding their place in lives of teachers, we may increase the effectiveness of enrolling new members and create a base for new organizations from an immense untapped membership pool of lesbian, gay and bisexual teachers, who could participate in their own liberation.

Why do teachers join these organizations? What social needs do such organization fulfill? How are joiners different or similar to nonparticipating teachers? There where no studies of lesbian and/or gay

teacher organizations or their members on which to base a theoretical study. Conceptually, it was assumed that members would be different from nonmembers based on non-gay studies of social participation. However, the direction and dimension of these differences were not assumed. This study is derived from an ancillary analysis of a national survey of lesbian, gay and bisexual public school teachers, and results are extrapolated from the differences between participating and nonparticipating respondents.

The original study examined the job satisfaction, job stress, identity, and openness of lesbian, gay and bisexual teachers (Juul, 1994). This study contrasted members of teacher organizations with nonmembers. The purpose of this study was to provide data that may be helpful in learning what role these organizations play in the lives of lesbian, gay and bisexual teachers and to provide these organizations with information on how to strengthen their membership. The study also provides some indications of how meeting the needs of lesbian, gay and bisexual teachers can be the basis for the creation of new organizations where they presently do not exist and increasing membership in existing organizations.

Greenberg's 1976 article, titled "The effects of a homophile organization on the self esteem and alienation of its members" found in the Journal of Homosexuality (p.313-17), remains the only article about participation in gay organizations. He had only 19 subjects in his study. He found that self-esteem was unaffected and that alienation related to being gay was initially reduced.

Methods and Techniques

Lesbian and/or gay male teacher organizations were contacted and asked to participate in a survey of lesbian, gay and bisexual teachers by distributing a survey on openness, job stress, and job satisfaction to their members, since obtaining membership lists was not possible. Thirteen organizations

agreed to participate in distributing the survey. One Colorado group withdrew over concerns about having the surveyed mailed. The sample included three national, four state, and five urban based gay teacher organizations.

A four-section instrument was constructed. The sections included an openness (identity) survey (alpha .872), a job satisfaction survey (Lester's TJSQ)(Lester, 1982; 1983), the Maslach Burnout Instrument, modified to included gay teacher specific stress items, (Maslach & Jackson, 1981a, 1981b)(alpha .838), and a demographic data section.

The survey packets contained two copies of the survey instrument, a cover letter, and return envelopes. By requesting the teacher who received the survey packet to pass along the second copy to a known lesbian, gay male, or bisexual teacher, who was not a member of a gay teacher group, the survey could be snowballed, thereby enlarging the survey population and providing a sampling group not associated with a gay teacher organization. Fourteen hundred survey packets were sent to various gay teacher groups for distribution in the Spring of 1992. Heterosexual surveys returned were not used in the data analysis. Sample size is N=868 (members n=611, nonmembers n=289). This shows a general sample response rate of approximately 43.6% (611 of 1400) for members of gay and lesbian teacher organizations, and a response rate of 20.6% on the second or snowballed survey (289 of 1400). If the assumption is made that only those member teachers who responded gave a known colleague the second survey, the response rate for the snowball would be approximately 47.3% (289 of 611).

Membership in Gay Teacher's Groups

Those lesbian, gay male, and bisexual teachers who were members of gay and/or lesbian teacher organizations demonstrated no significant differences in job satisfaction from those who were not members of such organizations (see Table 1). Differences in means were slight. High and low means

were distributed between the groups. There is a tendency for the members of organizations to have the

Table 1

Teacher Job Satisfaction and Level of Professional Challenge Factors by Participation: 1) Members, 2) Non-members

Factors TJSQ	Gp	Mean	T-value	Prob.
Supervision	1	44.96	.74	.461
	2	44.42		
Colleagues	1	30.17	-.14	.891
	2	30.22		
Pay	1	20.09	-1.26	.207
	2	20.58		
Advancement	1	15.22	1.12	.263
	2	14.88		
Wk conditions	1	16.31	-.68	.498
	2	16.50		
Students	1	16.53	.28	.779
	2	16.49		
Prof.devel.	1	9.81	.40	.692
	2	9.74		
Creativity	1	16.91	.48	.630
	2	16.83		
Recognition	1	13.44	-.11	.913
	2	13.46		
Security	1	11.03	-.30	.764
	2	11.08		
School policy	1	8.49	-.08	.937

Table 1

Teacher Job Satisfaction and Level of Professional Challenge Factors by Participation: 1) Members, 2) Non-members

Factors TJSQ	Gp	Mean	T-value	Prob.
	2	8.49		
Teaching	1	13.32		
	2	13.16	1.30	.194
Admin. policy	1	5.87		
	2	5.82	.30	.766
Per. respon.	1	12.68		
	2	12.57	.93	.352
Factors LPCQ				
Emotional exhaustion	1	24.54		
	2	23.56	1.17	.241
Identity dissonance	1	24.77		
	2	27.73	-2.78	.006
Personal accomp.	1	39.56		
	2	40.02	-1.02	.307
Depersonal-ization	1	7.48		
	2	6.87	1.59	.113

higher means among the ideographic factors, and lower means for the nomothetic factors, e.g. Supervision and Pay, although the differences were meager. On the LPCQ, the only significant difference was in the area of Identity Dissonance. The difference on the Identity Dissonance factor was highly significant. The other factors showed that members had somewhat higher scores than non-members for Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization. Members also had lower scores for

Personal Accomplishment. Members, therefore, were more inclined towards burnout, if one used only the MBI factors. Ostensibly, lower levels of Identity Dissonance did not increase the sense of accomplishment or decrease exhaustion and depersonalization among membership teachers. It would appear that the opposite occurred. That is, that through some unobserved mechanism, membership in gay teacher organizations brought about higher burnout, or people who joined gay teachers organizations were experiencing higher stress. It is equally possible that teachers who belong to gay teacher organizations are simply seeking greater social interactions which can not be found in their school environments and that lack of gay social contact brought about higher degrees of dissonance. It could be the effect of societal homophobia. It is interesting to speculate that membership may have affected the halo effect which has been noted previously on the MBI factors.

The influence of organization membership was demonstrated on the IDQ (see Table 2). Five of the six factors showed highly significant differences between the group means. The membership group showed higher mean scores on all significant factors. Separatism did not show significant differences between group means. This is consistent with Separatism being primarily an Affectional identity factor. The cumulative effect manifested a 9 point difference in means on the IDQ total score. Belonging to a gay teacher's organization appears to be a "coming out" event which can affect or support identity factors.

Table 2

Identity Disclosure Questionnaire Factors
by Membership: 1) Members,
2) Non-members

Factor	Gp	Mean	T-value	Prob.
Going public	1	28.37	7.91	.000
	2	24.07		
Integration	1	22.27	6.64	.000
	2	20.14		
Exposure	1	16.60	5.00	.000
	2	15.43		
Separatism	1	12.29	-.05	.962
	2	12.30		
Commitment	1	13.50	3.85	.000
	2	12.89		
Acceptance	1	17.69	4.09	.000
	2	16.95		
IDQTOT	1	120.55	8.08	.000
	2	111.33		

Note: IDQTOT, Identity Disclosure Questionnaire total

The demographic portrait for members of gay teacher's organizations is dissimilar from that of non-members (see Table 3). Membership tended to be more male than female. Members tended to have less time in their schools than non-members which supports the social need differences seen in LPCQ scores. If one was a member of a gay teacher's organization, one was be more likely to belong to a gay civil rights organization. Members were less likely to have married and less likely to have had

Table 3

Significant Demographic Data Survey Variables and Relationships by Membership: 1) Members, 2) Non-members

Variable	Gp	Mean	T-value	Prob.
Gender	1	1.49	3.35	.001
	2	1.37		
Yrs school	1	8.03	-2.39	.017
	2	9.39		
Civil rights organization	1	1.51	-8.97	.000
	2	1.79		
Married	1	1.74	-3.49	.001
	2	1.84		
Child	1	1.80	-3.19	.001
	2	1.88		
State law	1	1.84	-2.04	.041
	2	1.94		
Local ord.	1	1.84	-6.13	.000
	2	2.18		
Contract	1	1.87	-3.05	.002
	2	2.02		
Teaching again	1	1.54	-1.90	.062
	2	1.65		
Death of friend	1	1.60	-1.96	.050
	2	1.67		

Table 3

Significant Demographic Data Survey Variables
and Relationships by Membership:
1) Members, 2) Non-members

Variable	Gp	Mean	T-value	Prob.
Mother	1	2.37	-2.80	.005
	2	2.73		
Father	1	2.89	-2.57	.010
	2	3.27		
Sister(1)	1	1.74	-3.98	.000
	2	2.28		
Brother(1)	1	2.15	-3.42	.001
	2	2.65		
Ext. fam.	1	3.49	-2.33	.020
	2	3.78		
Employer	1	3.74	-4.62	.000
	2	4.32		
Supervisor	1	3.47	-4.38	.000
	2	4.04		
Topen	1	2.97	6.31	.000
	2	2.60		
Admopen	1	2.68	3.42	.001
	2	2.47		

children. Non-members felt less protected and were more unsure of their civil rights at all three levels of protection (state, local ordinance, and teacher contracts)(mean scores over 2.0 indicate not sure responses). Members felt more legally protected at all three levels. While not significant, members

were more likely to choose teaching again as a profession than non-members. Finally, members were significantly more likely to have experienced an AIDS related death during the prior year.

In the area of relationships, the difference between the groups was apparent. For five of six family relationship variables, members were significantly more open with family members than non-members. There was no significant difference with step-parents. School administrator relationships were also significantly different. Membership in a gay teacher's organization clearly demonstrates a willingness to be more open in the expression of sexual orientation.

Results

Those lesbian, gay male, and bisexual teachers who were members of lesbian and/or gay teacher organizations displayed no significant differences on 14 job satisfaction factors from those who were not members of such organizations. There is a tendency for the members of organizations to have the higher means among the ideographic factors, and lower means for the nomothetic factors, e.g., Supervision and Pay, although the differences were meager.

In job related stress (4 factors) the only significant difference was found in the area of Identity Dissonance (ID), ie., gay related stress at work. The difference on the ID factor was significant with members having less dissonance. The other factors showed that members had somewhat higher scores than nonmembers for Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization. Members also had lower scores for Personal Accomplishment. Members, therefore, were slightly more inclined toward burnout. People who joined gay teachers organizations were experiencing slightly higher work related stress or felt more able to express their work related stress. They were also more open. However, membership appeared to significantly reduce gay related stress at work. Teachers who belonged to organizations appeared to find greater social interaction and contact with other lesbian, gay and bisexual teachers important.

The influence of organizational membership was shown on the Identity Disclosure Questionnaire(IDQ). Five of the six factors showed significant differences between the group means. The membership group showed higher mean scores on all factors. Separatism did not show significant differences between group means. This is consistent with Separatism being primarily an Affectional identity issue. The cumulative effect manifested a 9-point difference in means on the IDQ total score. Belonging to a gay teacher's organization is a "coming out" event that can affect and support identity factors.

The demographic portrait for members of gay teacher organizations is dissimilar from that of nonmembers. Members tended to be more male than female. Members tended to have less time in their schools than nonmembers, which supports the social need differences seen in LPCQ scores. If one was a member of a gay teacher's organization, one was more likely to belong to a gay civil rights organization. Members were less likely to have married and less likely to have had children. Nonmembers felt less protected and were more unsure of their civil rights at all three levels of protection (state, local ordinance, and teacher contracts). Members felt more legally protected at all three levels. While not significant, members were more likely to choose teaching again as a profession than nonmembers. Finally, members were significantly more likely to have experienced an AIDS related death during the prior year. This was a result of greater male membership.

In the area of relationships, the difference between the groups was apparent. For five of six family relationship variables, members were significantly more open with family members than nonmembers. School administrator relationships were also significantly different. Membership in a gay teacher's organization clearly shows a willingness to be more open in the expression of sexual orientation. This is seen in the effect of membership on both openness variables, Topen and Admopen, where

higher scores indicated greater openness.

Implications

The data indicates that lesbian, gay and bisexual teacher organizations serve a series of particular functions for participating teachers. The need by lesbian, gay and bisexual teachers for social inaction with other lesbian, gay and bisexual teachers is apparent. The information dissemination role of these organizations is also evident as indicated by the increased understanding of gay civil rights protections. These organizations also seem to act as agents in the coming out process for public school teachers, even though it is an a coming out to others, it is also possible to see membership as a professional coming out. The increased stress levels of members combined with the greater openness of members may be a reflection of this coming out process. The causes for the increased openness of members with family and administrators needs more study. Emotional support, social events, and opportunities for social interaction may provide key components for increased membership and the basis for new lesbian, gay and bisexual organizations. It also appears that these organizations should recognize and develop their role in the "public school teachers" coming out process.

The rapid growth of the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Teachers Network, an organization that was not included in the original study, may also indicate a significant shift for lesbian, gay and bisexual teachers. By including straights in the title of the organization, teacher who join the organization may be screening their sexual identity; while the organization strives to build a coalition for gay understanding and civil rights.

Organizations which seek lesbian, gay and bisexual teacher members should actively engage in

helping teachers with coming out issues. In addition, follow-up programs to reassure and maintain contact with members, even through newsletters, should help members feel closer to each other and their common issues. These lesbian, gay and bisexual professional teacher organizations have an important purpose and role to play in the cultural tolerance of schools and educators.

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